Birth of the Bots

A Helldivers Short Story by CommissarTheDude

The year was 2184, the Illuminate had been exiled from the galaxy and relieved of their supposed weapons of mass destruction. The Bugs had been exterminated, with the surviving members of their species being contained in enclosures for E710 production. One final enemy remained for Super Earth to fight against, and that enemy was the Collective of Cyberstan, otherwise known as the Cyborgs. They were a sect of mechanically augmented rebels, bound to separate themselves from the ideals and territory of Super Earth.

Sergeant Baxter looked from the bow of his Super Destroyer down on the surface of Ras Algethi. He could see the forests and their openings, they spanned from pole to pole, with small bodies of water, akin to the Great Lakes back home on Super Earth. In those mesmerizing forests, however, the Cyborgs had entrenched themselves. The planet was a stepping stone to their home, and they knew that the planet would fall within the next couple of days.

Defeating the Cyborgs wasn't the reason he was here however, nor was he here to walk through the forest and admire into their endless beauty. He was sent by high command to investigate a strange series of occurrences happening planetside. A locally operating SEAF regiment had reported being assaulted by entirely mechanical Cyborg initiates, though only three lived to tell the tale. Sergeant Baxter wasn't entirely sure the stories were true, as it could be entirely possible they had mistaken some of the heavier Cyborg units for initiates, though

considering their corroboration and descriptions, it was also entirely possible they were telling the truth, rather than just having a debilitating case of shell shock.

"This is Sergeant Baxter, requesting permission to send squadron down to the surface of Ras Algethi for investigatory purposes." He called into his radio.

"Sergeant Baxter this is Super Earth High Command, Indi System Branch. Permissions granted." The young operator on the other side confirmed. The technology that allowed this communication had not even existed only fifty years earlier, a true testament to the rapid technological advancement a unified humanity had been able to achieve. The operator cut out for a couple of seconds, most likely due to interference, before responding. "Reinforcements on route to your co-ordinates."

Just a couple of seconds later, two more Super Destroyers appeared in the space on both sides of Sergeant Baxter's ship. The massive warships priming their guns and sending out smaller transports to greet him on the bridge of his own. The hangar opened wide to allow the two shuttles to enter, and a minute later, two more Helldivers walked up to the bridge.

They were both of the rank Private, though with different roles to play in this operation. To the left was Private Stokes, a designated scout who armed himself with high accuracy weapons. At his hip was the coveted Constitution rifle, though it had it's faults, it was still one of the most reliable firearms that one could arm themselves with, being incredibly popular among the general public. To the right was Private Sirius. Named after the planet in which he was born, he was more focused on Anti-Tank weaponry, already wearing his R-112

Recoilless Rifle, fully loaded with ammunition on his back. The two gave him a sturdy salute, before introducing themselves and their roles.

"Fantastic." Sergeant Baxter boomed. "You two will follow my lead until your assistance and particular expertise is required."

"Yes sir!" They responded obediently.

"Excellent, let's get this show on the road! Helldiver to Hellpods!"

The squad climbed into the pods and readied their equipment, selecting a drop site closest to a series of supposed Cyborg trench systems and embattlements. The top hatch of the Hellpods were automatically closed as the final preliminary checks were performed to ensure maximum safety and security against the intense conditions experienced during atmospheric entry. A series of firing pins engaged against the Hellpods, sending them hurling towards the surface.

Inside of his Hellpod, Sergeant Baxter was consumed by his thoughts. He was anticipating very little resistance, especially considering the planet's current rating of two out of fifteen on the Freedom Fighter Fatality Index, but then why would High Command send him here? What could be so important that it required immediate action to be taken? Something wasn't right, and Baxter knew it. He was unsure if the other two Helldivers were aware of the mission's contents, though he assumed that they had been given a briefing in transit to Ras Algethi, but he wondered if this would correspond to their ability to enact their orders. *I hope that my training as a Sergeant has prepared me enough to lead these two into battle, and take out whatever is drawing us here within a timely manner.* Baxter thought.

There was a sudden jolt that shook the Hellpod from top to bottom. The jet engines on the device's sides had engaged to slow it down to a safe enough speed, as to not crush their occupants upon impact. Just a couple of milliseconds later, the Hellpods lodged themselves in the ground as the hatches disengaged. In a matter of seconds, the three Helldivers climbed out of their pods and readied their weapons. Sergeant Baxter held his Liberator's scope close to his eye, scanning for any foes he would face. About twenty meters away, a group of Cyborg initiates wandered in the brush.

Baxter eyed this group closely signaling to his comrades to stay put and keep watch for any surrounding patrols. He took a closer look at the patrol's composition and noticed something off about them. The initiates were without a squad leader, and thus were unable to call for reinforcements. He took his eye of the scope before turning back to his squad. "Cyborg patrol, twenty meters north. Open fire!"

The three Helldivers threw volleys of lead at the initiates, who in retaliation fired their submachine guns back at them. Private Sirius' Breaker shotgun thundered round after round into the group, felling several of them within a three round burst. Private Stokes took to a more slow and accurate approach, using the iron sights of his Constitution to carefully pick out the Cyborgs one by one. Sergeant Baker stuck to his training, spraying the targets one by one with bullets until they fell, and moving on to the next one. The firefight lasted for around twenty seconds before it reached it's conclusion. The Cyborgs had been annihilated, only grazing Private Sirius' left shoulder plate. Their inaccurate fire doing more damage to the trees behind the Helldivers than their armor.

The group walked over to the Cyborgs' position, around fifteen initiates lay motionless on the forest floor. Sergeant Baxter and the two Privates didn't take much time to ruminate on their actions, instead moving in their direction through a path the planet's occupiers had carved out of the wood.

"Where do you think they were going?" Private Stokes asked excitedly.

"Most likely towards an encampment or defensive line." Baxter responded. "Satellite imaging has revealed tons of bases and trenches camouflaged within the woods, so be careful out here."

"So then why aren't we going in that direction? Won't we be allowing their defenses to stand?" Stokes replied.

Private Sirius looked Stokes dead in the eyes. "Because we're not here for recon, there's some kind of facility nearby which could be critical to the Cyborgs plans of defending Cyberstan." Sirius growled.

Sergeant Baxter was partially relieved. *At least one of them knows why we're here.* He thought. "Private Sirius is correct. And this facility is something we've never seen before, the rumor is that this facility is producing fully mechanical initiates."

"But I thought the Cyborgs were fighting an ideological battle? That humanity wasn't just the flesh we were born with, but could be expanded and perfected through machinery? What is a Cyborg without the human section?" Private Stokes remarked.

"Nothing more than a soulless automaton." Baxter responded.

"I think I know their strategy." Sirius exclaimed. "They must be a way for the Cyborgs to cover their retreat, allowing these machines to hold the line allows them to make Cyberstan a fortress, one that could take weeks to even make planetfall on!"

The very thought of this was concerning for Baxter. Reports had already said that Cyberstan was covered in anti aircraft and anti orbital sites, and had been covered in massive munitions, manufacturing, and augmentation centers. The thought of a planet being entirely terraformed for the purpose of being a killing field was outright disturbing. "Let's focus on our current objective before our eventual fight on Cyberstan. Stokes, scout ahead while keeping yourself concealed, tell us what you see through this radio." Baxter said while tossing over the communications device.

Private Stokes caught the device, running into the tree line with a nod of agreement and understanding. In nearly an instant, he was gone, his armor the perfect fit for the planet's terrain and foliage. The other two Helldivers could see rustling in the brush, though they knew that it would be hard for any enemy to determine if it was wildlife or a possible threat.

Turning to Private Sirius, Sergeant Baxter relayed another set of orders. "Stick with me and take out any heavy targets you see on my mark."

"Copy that Sarge." Sirius responded. The two ran down the pathway until the forest opened into a large clearing. In the center was a large circular pad. There were more initiates defending the position, though only two heavily armored Infantry Fighting Vehicles, and a singular squad leader standing menacingly with his grenade launcher ready to fire a flare at a moment's notice.

Sergeant Baxter's radio sprung to life with Stokes' voice. "I've got eyes on a massive encampment, IFVs, possible missile silos, and lots of initiates."

"I see a squad leader directly in between the two IFVs, take him out." Baxter responded. A couple of seconds later, a bullet hit it directly in it's head, sparks flying from it's cybernetics as it collapsed to the ground. Without reinforcements, the IFVs lowered their ramps and let out their payloads towards the tree line where Stokes had been.

"He has to have moved by now." Sirius remarked. Looking in the direction of the assault, the foliage rustled again, and Private Stokes appeared out of the brush.

"Focus yourself Sirius!" Baxter barked, "Take out those IFVs, we can't let them deploying units on us."

Private Sirius readied his Recoilless Rifle, aiming it towards the first vehicle's body. Firing the rocket directly into the armored vehicle's side, the ammunition exploded, sending chunks of twisted metal plates all over the clearing. Sirius reloaded, and fired the second shot against the second vehicle, with it suffering the same fate.

The destruction of two of their vehicles drew the attention of the mob of Cyborgs. A crowd of chainsaw wielding Berserkers flailed their arms while running frantically towards the Helldivers' position. Sirius stowed away his Recoilless Rifle and readied his Breaker, spraying down the two monstrosities before they could get close enough to do any serious damage.

A group of initiates managed to get within striking distance of Private Stokes, allowing him to run the internal magazine of his Constitution dry. Though he was out of bullets in the chamber, he fixed his bayonet and charged at the Cyborgs. One by one, he parried their thrusts and drew his blade into their augmented bodies, all while screaming patriotic phrases enthusiastically while being covered in a shower of sparks and oil.

The engagement winded down, giving Sergeant Baxter the opportunity to rush towards the center of the circular platform while the other two Helldivers maintained covering fire. Standing still to call in an air dropped mine field, he heard something that made his blood run cold.

THUMP THUMP! THUMP THUMP!

It was the distinct sound of anti aircraft fire. Without his knowledge, a group of Cyborgs had armed a nearby site and began firing upon the support aircraft, taking out it's wing, sending it careening into the trees. There was a brief moment of silence before a massive explosion erupted from the direction of the crash, it appeared as if all of the munitions on board the aircraft and in the site had detonated. Some of the surrounding trees flattened, toppling over from the shockwave.

The firefight had come to an end, once more the Helldivers had come out victorious, though they had lost one of their most important assets for the time being.

There was a terminal at the center of the platform, written entirely in Cyberstani, Sergeant Baxter was clueless as to what it meant. Worse yet, he did not have a translator handy with him to decode what the terminal read, though he trusted his gut that following it's instructions would be the right decision. The two Privates made their way to the Sergeant's side, once more forming a defensive perimeter and scanning their surroundings for any sign of approaching Cyborg patrols.

Baxter continued to fiddle with the terminal, until eventually, he heard something engage within the pad. The suspected silos began to open, though upon closer inspection, they did not bear any missiles. *Thank goodness we didn't arm any nuclear sites or anything of the sort*. Baxter thought. But just as he was ready to

breathe a sigh of relief, he heard a whirr of mechanisms beginning to start underneath his feat. Suddenly, a set of platforms rose up to the surface, revealing a large amount of mechanical soldiers. They were sputtering and dripping oil with every step, but they had armed their assault rifles and fired upon the three Helldivers.

"The rumors! They're true!" Sergeant Baxter exclaimed before a spray of bullets whizzed past his helmet. "Fall back to the trees" He screamed, throwing one of his two grenades into the mass of machines. Private Sirius and Private Stokes did the same, with Stokes nailing another bayonet strike into one of the machines' heads before making a break for the trees once more.

The machines gave chase, though at a fairly slow pace, with a couple of them falling with no input from the Helldivers weaponry, rather their legs and torsos falling apart due to poor construction. After running for around one hundred meters, the squad came to rest. Private Sirius took a moment before catching his breath. "What's the plan now? We don't have any air support, those things are durable and dangerous, and we aren't prepared to fight against them!"

"Calm down Sirius, Sarge is thinking of a plan." Stokes barked.

Baxter was reloading his Liberator, it's muzzle still glowing from the sheer volume of fire it had dispensed over the past couple of minutes. "Stokes, I want you to scout ahead again, but under the strict order not to fire. Sirius, you're going to head back to the clearing and fire HEAT rounds into the silos, hopefully that will disable them for good. If that doesn't work, call in a Hellbomb. I'll mop up the survivors of that ambush down the path, Sirius, you take the left, Stokes, to the right." He tapped on his stratagem keypad. Down, down, up, right. In an instant, another Hellpod came screaming from orbit.

It made impact a couple meters in front of the group, the two Privates flinched, not knowing what would emerge. To their relief, inside was a load of ammunition. "Stock up men, we may have to fire every last bullet if we want to make it out of here alive." Sergeant Baxter remarked before taking a third of the ammunition. After taking his share, he bolted down the path in the direction which they had come. Following their orders, the two Privates took to the flanks.

The automaton patrol continued down the path in pursuit of the three Helldivers. Though they had very limited intelligence, they were able to remember their targets incredibly well, a statement for their Cyborg masters' ingenuity when it came to designing weapons of war. Suddenly, the lead unit stopped and began to scan the tree line, noticing some anomalies in the brush. The rest of the group became fixated on the trees as well, supposedly believing that there might have been something there. This was the opportunity Sergeant Baxter needed, he threw a grenade into the pack stealthily, moving into cover as it blew. As predicted massive damage was caused to the formation, with the single grenade taking out at least seven or eight of the machines. The closest unaffected bots ran towards Baxter's predicted location, though when they arrived, they found that he was no longer there.

Suddenly, a burst of gunfire erupted from the trees, Sergeant Baxter's Liberator sliced through the first automaton, taking much longer to down the second. He sent a message to Private Stokes. "Open fire on the patrol, if you have to, fix bayonet and charge them with melee, I'll cover you."

Stokes obliged, picking off individual machines with incredible accuracy. He dug into his ammunition pouch a couple of times to reload his rifle, but he found that it took much longer to reload than it would for him to run out of cover and stab the mechanical monstrosities. After depleting the internal magazine of his

Constitution once more, he ran out of the shelter of the forest and hacked the first automatons that he came across to bits, leaving a trail of dismembered, smoldering machines in his wake. He performed these actions under the watchful gaze of Sergeant Baxter, who continued to lay down shots to assist.

The ambush had worked, the entire patrol had been killed off for good. "Now it's up to Private Sirius to take out the pad, then we can get out of there." Sergeant Baxter said triumphantly.

"But wouldn't it make more sense if we went all in?" Stokes replied eagerly.

"What do you mean by that Private?"

"I mean that we should go assist! We shouldn't just leave Sirius to fend for himself, not to mention the Breaker has a horribly ammunition economy. He'll be out in a minute!"

Sergeant Baxter thought for a moment, before nodding in agreement. The two Helldivers picked up their pace and continued down the path towards the clearing.

At the site Private Sirius was hard at work, setting up defenses and picking off some small bands of Cyborgs. Peering down one of the open silos, he could hear some machines walking around. He assumed that they were about to head into the silo and prepare to be deployed. Not knowing what else to do, he waited for them to enter his line of sight. Gradually, more and more automatons stepped into the light, not noticing his presence or simply lacking the mobility in their necks to crane them upwards to spot him.

He tossed a grenade into the silo, which got the attention of the machines around it, though they were helpless to prevent it's detonation. Sirius stood back from the silo as it blew. Looking back down the shaft, he

could see complete devastation, a pool of oil lay at the bottom with parts of machines laying all around, all were surely nothing but scrap now, not to mention whatever mechanism would bring them to the surface would be completely destroyed.

Sirius did the same to the other silo, tossing another grenade down the silo shaft to disable it. Opening up his stratagem keypad, he entered in the relatively long combination for a Hellbomb, placing it carefully in the center of the complex. Before it was dropped from orbit, Sirius fired his Recoilless Rifle into the shafts, making the second collapse in on itself. *There is no way that this facility will have any utility to it when I'm finished here.* He thought to himself. Looking up at Sergeant Baxter's Super Destroyer, he watched as the bridge's Hellpod Delivery System opened up to allow the Hellbomb to deploy. It landed in the exact spot he had called it in, in the middle of the facility.

Checking that the surrounding areas were clear, Sirius armed the Hellbomb, it's warning beeps getting progressively faster as it got closer to detonating. To his left was the path he had come from, but to his right, he saw something horrifying. A group of Cyborg infantry, some of which heavily armed, approaching out of the trees to examine the commotion. They quickly noticed him and opened fire, taking advantage of his Breaker's limited range. Sirius aimed his Recoilless rifle and shot at the heaviest unit, a Hulk. It blocked the shot with it's shield, though it was staggered. Frantically reloading his weapon, bullets whizzed all around him, some grazing his armor.

Suddenly, he felt an impact on his chest, much larger than the others. A bullet had struck him in his abdomen, though he was without injury. The force of the bullet had made a dent in his armor and knocked him off of his feet. He laid down on the ground, with his Rifle still unloaded and several meters away from him.

Private Sirius panicked, trying his best to reach his anti tank weapon in time, though the volley of lead flying above him kept Sirius pinned in place.

He was relieved when the Hellbomb went off. Sirius was sent tumbling away from the blast, and luckily, so were the Cyborgs. After the dust had settled, he quickly got to his feet and regained his bearings. There was complete devastation around him, only a couple of Cyborgs had survived the blast, but the Hulk did not. Taking aim with his Breaker, he picked off the last few surviving units before, walking over to the path.

Sergeant Baxter and Private Stokes awaited his return, greeting him with a salute as he made his way over to the path. "We were late to arrive, and from what we could see, we thought you were surely going to die." Stokes said astonished.

"I'm surprised I made it as well!" Sirius replied while catching his breath. He felt the dent the Cyborg's bullet had left, "I guess I'm lucky I got hit, I was protected from the blast."

"Great job taking out that facility Private." Baxter complimented. "Those Cyborgs won't be able to utilize this land again. Once they are pushed out of this world, their machinations will be halted forevermore. Our next objective is to go back to the Super Destroyer and await further orders."

The group of Helldivers walked towards their extraction point, ready to return to their ships, awaiting their next assignments, ready to face whatever would come their way.